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ABSTRACT

Noting that the feminization of the typical public relations classroom has increased interest in how educators can meet the needs of their female and minority students, this paper discusses an approach to teaching that integrates concerns for diversity in what is taught, how it is taught, and who is being taught. The paper begins with an explanation of factors that contribute to reluctance to teaching new material with anything but a time-honored method. The paper then argues that the way an individual learns affects what is learned. It concludes that the interactive, seminar process offers the greatest potential for helping students and faculty co-construct their knowledge of complex, multifaceted material. The paper also concludes that this, in turn, should lead to a generation of mangers who will reject any asymmetrical practice that does not value the diversity, the equity, the cooperation and the responsibility that have characterized their education. Forty-three references are attached. (SR)

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SEMINARS: THE INTERSECTION OF PEDAGOGY AND CONTENT IN TRANSFORMING PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

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Abstract

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Along with the feminization of the typical public relations classroom has come increasing interest in how educators can meet the needs of their female and minority students. This paper discusses an approach to teaching that integrates our concerns for diversity in what we are teaching, how we are teaching and whom we are teaching. It begins with an explanation of the factors that contribute to our reluctance to teaching new material with anything but a time-honored method. However, it argues that the *way* we learn affects *what* we learn. It concludes that the interactive, seminar process offers the greatest potential for helping students and faculty co-construct their knowledge of complex, multifaceted material. This, in turn, should lead to a generation of managers who will reject any asymmetrical practice that does not value the diversity, the equity, the cooperation and the responsibility that have characterized their education.

SEMINARS: THE INTERSECTION OF PEDAGOGY AND CONTENT IN TRANSFORMING PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

Almost seventy percent of the students we teach in public relations at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are women--the highest ratio of women among the specializations that include advertising, news-editorial and broadcast within the umbrella of journalism (Peterson, 1988). Along with the feminization of the typical public relations classroom[1] has come increasing interest in how educators can meet the needs of their female and minority students. Three articles in a single, recent *Journalism Educator* explored the challenges and opportunities these changing demographics present (Becker, 1989; Creedon, 1989a; Kern-Foxworth, 1989).

Together these articles and a series of recent conference papers (see, for example, Toth & Cline, 1989; Grunig, 1989a and b; and Childers & Grunig, 1989) suggest that our understanding of public relations must be reconstructed by bringing gender, race, class and ethnicity fully into the center of our teaching. In his recent presidential address to the Speech Communication Association, Friedrich (1989) urged educators to accept cultural pluralism as a goal toward which to strive. He asked, though, "How must we proceed?"

Beck (1989) argued that the way to reconceptualize our approach to teaching the variety and complexity of the human experience begins with deconstruction. Simply put, this involves the exploration of how the discipline has been constructed and defined as well as the way it has been taught. Public relations, like most fields, has been viewed from and taught from largely a white male perspective or worldview. A transformed perspective

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[1] For a comprehensive look at the gender switch in mass communication, see Creedon, 1989b.

should integrate our concerns for diversity in what we are teaching, how we are teaching and who we are teaching.

As I argued in a recent book on the gender switch in mass communication (

), nothing short of such a "transformation" seems adequate. Although this buzz phrase has become trendy, few students actually are exposed to the new scholarship by and about women and minorities. Schneir (1972) considered this a matter of "shocking ignorance" of the history of half the human race (p. xi). The president of Lincoln University (Sudarkasa, 1987) echoed her outrage: "In a world where demographic shifts have already stood the concepts of majority and minority on their heads, it is no longer intellectually defensible to presume to discuss human endeavor and human interaction from the perspective of only one group" (p. 42).

Although much preliminary theorizing has been done along these lines, this research has had little impact on instruction itself. Both the content of the courses we teach and the climate of our classrooms should foster students' understanding of what exists, what is possible and what is ideal--both in terms of effectiveness and ethics.

The transformed perspective that may result should, at the same time, produce new and more comprehensive personal choices. And along with the realization on the part of both young men and women that a management career in public relations may be open to them, a more critical view of the field might develop. As it is, we know that many of our female students will go on to fill the technician's role rather than the managerial role throughout their careers. Of course, some women self-select that role, considering it a "safe haven." Too many others find it imposed upon them.

Unfortunately, any transformation of the curriculum and of our teaching style is a daunting project. To transform is to risk being called "ideologically unmodulated feminists," as Freedman (1989) referred to proponents of transformation in his indictment of what he considered the unethical professoriat.

Perhaps more inhibitive is the fact that people tend to teach the way they were taught. Moving from the didactic mode of lecture format to any one of a number of more interactive approaches can be wrenching. But teaching and learning are interrelated. For this reason, feminist pedagogy--which rejects the didactic for the interactive--has important implications for students.

Thorne (1989) may have been the first to highlight the connection between feminist pedagogy and the radical pedagogy of Paolo Freire. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1972) described a way to teach literacy to Latin American peasants. His approach valued dialogue in the same way that feminists value interaction. His method sought to break through the silence and passivity that had grown out of years of invisibility, marginality, fear and impotence. His goal was to empower these subordinated groups.

Incorporating new scholarship about women and minorities into the content of our courses seems equally arduous. The undergraduate curriculum, already under fire for bowing to the vocational orientation of today's students (especially in the professional fields, such as public relations), now risks the label of becoming "political."

In actuality, however, most introductory courses continue to reflect traditional academic values (*Faculty are traditionalists*, 1989). Herein lies the "puzzling constellation of challenges" recently articulated by the chairman of anatomy and neurobiology at Colorado State University (Roper, 1989): designing a modern curriculum within a sophisticated

research environment for fields steeped in centuries of tradition while at the same time responding to "hot topics" of society.

Given these problems,[2] why should we bother to embark on such a difficult, time-consuming and risky project as changing our teaching style and our course content? The question may seem most relevant for those of us who work in major research universities, where research--rather than service and even teaching--seems to be most valued. At its most basic, consider this: According to the former president of the American Association of University Professors, teaching remains the main activity of professors (Stern, 1990). She reported that between 55 and 75 percent of faculty time is spent in instruction. Perhaps more important, Stern (who is a scholar of communication) contended that we have failed to appreciate "the heterogeneous nature of our enterprise" (p. 2).

Barriers to Transformation of Teaching Style

The dilemma, of course, is teaching new--rather than more established--material with anything but a time-honored method, whether it be cadaver dissection in gross anatomy or lecture in public relations theory. Many factors contribute to this inertia, factors explainable in different terms from different disciplinary perspectives.

Marketing researchers, for example, would attribute the phenomenon to "habit lag," or continuing to use a familiar but outmoded product even while realizing that a newer, better but unfamiliar product is available. Professors, too, may know that newer, more

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[2] One also might question why women and minority students--those who have found themselves in inferior positions in the academy, have acquiesced and have failed to demand "equal mention" and "equal attention" in the classroom. The only logical responses I have been able to generate include (1) the understanding that most students subscribe to the myth of equality and (2) the likelihood that course by course, semester by semester, many students are finding it all they can do simply to try to complete their degrees ( ).

comprehensive information is available in the literature but locating, reading, digesting and finally incorporating that new information into their syllabi, assignments and exams may seem too time-consuming, too threatening and too difficult.

Public health professionals would distinguish between "need" and "demand," understanding that people might *need* to confront certain illnesses (such as heart disease or high blood pressure) but may not *demand* treatment because they are unaware of the problem or actually resist dealing with it. The obvious analogy with the academy comes when the faculty faces an increasingly diverse student body but either is oblivious to that growing heterogeneity or consciously attempts to discourage non-traditional students.

Researchers in the area of innovation would look to the diffusion process to explain why transformation of the curriculum remains problematic. They would explain that "innovators" of a new or radically improved process or product tend to be misfits, fringe elements of the community or society, rather than comfortable, mainstream, popular members of the group. Thus we can project that professors anxious to fit in with their colleagues may not risk adopting an inventive teaching technique or course content--especially if those professors are untenured.[3]

Although the literature suggests that the typical lag between the development of a new product and its acceptance in the market runs ten to fifteen years, we also know that some innovations never are adopted. The computer industry, for example, offered what its proponents called "a magnificent opportunity" to transform the learning process in fields

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[3] Some scholars have made a discouraging finding: that people who become instrumental in defining the identity of their field often are those at the periphery--those whom Robertson (1988) called "the non-conformists, the defiers of categories, the tricksters, the survivors of defeat" (p. 12).

such as mathematics as early as 1960, yet computer-assisted instruction has flopped (Drew, 1989).

All of the above explanations relate to the concept of habit, custom or convention. A professor of education and management at the Claremont Graduate School (Drew, 1989) illustrated this notion with historian Morrison's story of the British military during World War II. Senior artillery men seemed to waste incredible motion with their truck-based cannons left over from the first World War. The explanation came from a retired general, who simply figured, "They're reining in the horses." Drew concluded this narrative with the old Navy saying, "If you dig down deep enough in a battleship, you may find sails" (p. 14).

The field of education may offer the most cogent explanation for the failure of members of the professoriat to transform their style of teaching and their course content to reflect new scholarship about women and minorities. According to a recent study on faculty planning, the National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning (cited in *Faculty are traditionalists*, 1989) found three strong influencers: professors' beliefs about the purposes of education, their estimates of students' characteristics and their perceptions of their field. Most faculty members believe the purpose of education is to teach students to think critically. They tend to agree that students' preparation, interests and goals should weigh more heavily in course planning than external pressure such as accrediting standards.

However, the professoriat differs on the key dimension of belief about their own field. Three major beliefs dominate the way faculty members look at their academic disciplines. Some consider their field an organized body of knowledge to transmit. Implicit in such belief is the assumption that the lecture mode is an appropriate means of

transmission. Other professors see their field as the embodiment of skills for students to learn and apply. Presumably, their teaching style would emphasize coaching. Still others, however, view their field as a group of scholars opening their ranks to students. Here the seminar approach conceivably would be valued.

Now return to an understanding of the second key dimension, or the characteristics and perceptions those students bring to the classroom. As Botan and Hunt (1988) explained, people conceptualize their field differently before and after they have studied it systematically. However, they pointed out, little of the literature on classroom teaching of public relations focuses on students' perceptions of their field and less still on sex differences. They did review a number of studies designed to encourage students to understand the thought processes behind performing public relations tasks.[4] They concluded, however, with the recommendation that we continue to examine the question of differences between men and women who study public relations.

Unfortunately, few of us have experienced the true seminar that would serve as a model for enlarging all students' understanding of ideas, issues and values. As the deputy director of the Council for Basic Education (Gray, 1989) explained, "Even though we may have enrolled in classes called 'seminars' somewhere in our formal education, few of us have ever experienced the kind of learning that can occur. . ." (p. 17).

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[4] Perhaps most relevant here is the work of Rayfield and Pincus (1987), who discovered a relationship between greater involvement of students in a campaigns course and increasing students' control over how the course is run.

The Relationship Between Content and Teaching Style

Thus we see that the *way* we learn affects *what* we learn. Similarly, what we teach affects how we teach. As McIntosh (cited in McMillen, 1987) explained, the concept of a transformed curriculum prompts scholars to change their *approach* to teaching as well. But how can information be conveyed without lecture?

Book (1989) argued that teachers and learners "co-construct" knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge, according to Shulman (1986), includes both the subject matter regularly taught in one's disciplinary area and the most useful way to represent those topics so others can comprehend them. Working from Shulman's research on pedagogical content knowledge, Book contended that the way an instructor represents knowledge to his or her students should depend on their understandings and preconceptions about that content. As she put it, "The particular understanding of the way one teaches a particular subject area to make it meaningful to students is the key for people who study the intersection of pedagogy and content" (p. 318).

Dervin's (1984) work on sense-making helps explain what she considered a "chasm" between the message a communicator intends to send and what the receiver actually gets from the message. Rather than the normative view that the message contains information, which has been assumed to be "a thing that can be transferred via messages" (p. 31), she contended that information is the sense the receiver makes to bridge the gaps in his or her world.

This sense-making approach offers important implications for pedagogy and course content. First, Dervin (1984) considered the characteristics and life contexts of receivers (read "students") not as barriers to messages but as the context within which receivers, or

students, use messages to make sense of their world. She regarded both message-using (which could be considered learning) and message-making (which could be considered teaching) not as an input-output system but as "constructing" activity (which could be considered co-constructing because of its interactive nature). She concluded that sense-making assumes that the communicator look at receivers as much as possible *on their own terms* (p. 33, emphasis added).

Making meaning also depends at least in part, according to Shulman (1986), on choosing the most powerful examples, metaphors, illustrations and demonstrations when presenting new material. Feminist pedagogy makes a more specific argument for the "power of the first example." Both the first item taught in a course and the frequency with which that first topic is referred to subsequently tend to make it the most thoroughly understood part of the course (Schuster & Van Dyne, 1985). More often, however, new material (such as a focus on minorities or women) is taught at the end of the syllabus where it may not even be reached, let alone perceived as important (Coulter, Edgington & Hedges, 1986). As a result, feminists suggest placing the new scholarship on women and minorities first and continuing to integrate it throughout the course.

However, pedagogical content knowledge unique to public relations (and even to the broader field of communication, according to Book, 1989) has not been explored. Book considered many of the basic tenets of her field, communication, in a litany of rhetorical questions that could be reworded to speak to the concerns of educators in public relations. In an effort to examine the ways in which her discipline is represented to students of all ages, including young adults, she asked whether:

* Standard textbooks convey appropriate or distorted the views of the field.

* Students come to understand how theories and principles can be used.

* Two-way communication exercises really reflect "good" feedback.

* Studying cross-cultural communication processes helps students improve communication with people of diverse backgrounds.

* Students are challenged to discuss the impact of current events on society.

* The instructor understands the preconceptions or misperceptions the class brings to the subject.

More concretely, a panel of scholars and administrators recently urged faculty members to give more recognition to both *topics* and *styles* of scholarship "that are of particular interest to minority scholars but may have been undervalued, discouraged, or ignored by other scholars" ("Meeting the National Need for Minority Scholars and Scholarship," quoted in Friedrich, 1989, p. 4).

The Seminar Format as a Transformative Strategy

Understanding the relationship between pedagogy and content suggests that the seminar *format*--rather than lectures or even lab classes--is appropriate for many courses in public relations. Aspects of the format can be incorporated into large courses traditionally taught as lectures and into small, hands-on classes typically taught as labs.

Spelling out exactly how to teach lectures and labs as seminars would require a book-length treatise. Instead, I will offer general principles that explain the importance of the seminar approach, with implications--rather than prescriptions--for implementation in any size or type of class in public relations. The seminar *process* is especially valuable when incorporating new ideas about the roles and opportunities of women and minorities.

The ideal way to learn to conduct such a seminar-type course, according to Gutek (quoted in Drew, 1989) is to experience such a seminar oneself: "If you have local experts --faculty colleagues or staff members--who can provide you with information and guidance, you are more likely to use [the innovation]" (p. 14). More often, however, students and faculty alike may not be clear on what the seminar should accomplish, how it should be facilitated, and what role both participants and instructor should play. Students may find a statement on their syllabus that reads somewhat as follows: "Because JOUR ### is a seminar, you are encouraged/expected/required to participate." In fact, part of students' grades in a seminar may depend on that critical participation. Unfortunately, too few students know what is expected of them because too few of us--students and faculty alike--have experienced an effective seminar.

This paper should help instructors interested in transforming if not the content, at least the teaching style they use. More specifically, it will describe the characteristics of any effective seminar. It will explain role of both students and teachers. It will make clear what both have to benefit from their engagement in the seminar process.

First, consider the characteristics of an effective seminar.[5] They include:

* Strenuous practice in close reading.

* Precise thinking.

* Careful listening.

* Clear speaking.

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[5] These attributes have been distilled in large part from the work of Dennis Gray (1989, p. 17), whose responsibility with the San Diego public school system is implementing seminars there district wide. I also have benefitted from being a seminar participant myself, as part of (summer 1989) transformation-of-the-curriculum project. If not for that recent experience and for reading Gray's work, I might have been a victim of my own past.

* Mutual respect.

All of these components should characterize any course in public relations--graduate or undergraduate level, lecture or lab, theoretical or applied. For example, the interactive nature of a true seminar can be evidenced in a large lecture class for undergraduates. When you see more than a few wrinkled brows, ask questions suggested in an article on "Seminar Strategies" (1987): What question are we trying to answer? Why? How does this relate to . . .(what we said before, read last week, concluded last class and so forth)? Questions--rather than answers--should pull students into the "discussion" rather than allowing them to sit back, perhaps with minds wandering.

Another interactive technique typical of the seminar--one that works well in any small class--is to assign roles to student speakers on a rotating basis. Roles (from "Seminar Strategies," 1987) include:

* Explorer (Let's throw this out, give this a try);

* Gadfly (Everyone seems to be content with saying);

* Matchmaker (What you are saying is a lot like what so-and-so was saying);

* Will Rogers (Let's find a way to make this seemingly incorrect statement plausible);

* Sherlock Holmes (I think we've overlooked something important);

* Librarian (Here's a passage that supports your point);

* Journalist (Let me summarize the key points here);

* Referee (I'll determine which claims seem warranted or unwarranted); and

* Coach (Your point might be strengthened by.. . .).

The Role of the Facilitator

Becoming an effective facilitator of a seminar does not happen automatically or easily, whether the facilitator-to-be is a traditionalist or a feminist already steeped in feminist pedagogy. However, feminists have become particularly interested in analyzing the authority relationship in the typical classroom (Coulter, Edgington & Hedges, 1986). They are concerned that the classroom replicates the male, patriarchal values of a society that historically has oppressed women and made them invisible. Coulter, Edgington and Hedges (1986) acknowledge that although it is possible for women to learn in such an environment, it is not ideal.

Out of this and similar concerns have grown a list of books and articles that suggest classroom procedures intended to reduce the teacher's authority and empower the students. Students, in essence, becomes more responsible for their own learning. Coulter and her colleagues (1986) then posed the question: "Is the real point to reduce authority or change the learning experience?" (p. 140). Without being able to answer, they pointed to the challenge this question poses as we begin to teach the new scholarship on women.

Unfortunately, most professors begin to learn new content and new process with as much difficulty as mastering tennis left-handed instead of right-handed. The following standard recommendations (Gray, 1989) for conducting seminars should provide a useful path:

* Start gradually, expecting students to handle a larger share of the time as the weeks go by.

* Begin the seminar only with enough of an introduction to set the stage, allocating the most time for conversation.

* Don't even try to be a "perfect" leader. Instead, be willing to seem awkward and uncertain.[6]

* Be thoughtful and realistic in selection of the texts.

* Insist on participants' using the text to support their comments, answers and arguments.

* Resist the temptation to supply answers yourself. Instead, all seminar participants should struggle if necessary to answer, explain, clarify and amplify. (Expect some long silences![7])

* Be didactic only when supplying necessary information. In general, be a co-learner and discussion facilitator rather than an authority on the text in question.

* Coach participants in seminar behavior and then allow the group to critique the seminar. Periodically seek input from the group about the seminar's direction and effectiveness.

* Outside the seminar remind chronically silent participants of their responsibility to contribute. At the same time acknowledge that active listening is a legitimate way of participating. You may decide to adopt an observer's role in the seminar, for those whose personality or language ability makes frequent conversation problematic.

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[6] In fact, one expert in seminars suggested saying something wrong or doing something that goes wrong and asking students to trouble-shoot, to speculate and to determine what went wrong and why ("How to Get Students to Ask Good Questions," 1987).

[7] Thorne (1989) suggested that the silences tend to come more from female than male students. She described the other side "blanking out" as the inflated sense of presence and self-importance that accompanies priv e. She explained: "In dominant settings like universities, where white, class-privil d men and their subcultures prevail, those not of the entitled categories may experience a ticular kind of silence, infused with feelings of not being quite at home, of anxiety, of self doubt" (p. 313).

Feminists also suggest that teachers provide opportunities for talking with students both during the seminar and outside of class. During a series of such discussions, called DIALOGUES, professors at Towson State University in Maryland discovered that although faculty consider themselves available to students and eager to communicate with them, their students remain intimidated and hesitate to approach their professors to express either interest or dissatisfaction (Coulter, Edgington & Hedges, 1986). They concluded that students are skeptical that the faculty really wants to engage in open and honest conversation.

Finally, allow the use of time to remain flexible. The class should evolve throughout the semester. Flexibility allows for investigation in more detail of questions of special interest or difficulty to participants. Ideally, only the first twenty percent of the course would be planned thoroughly in advance (Grunig, 1989b). As Butler (1985) put it, "Real transformation. . .requires a willingness to revise even while teaching, a willingness to be surprised" (p. 82). Also, students should be encouraged to contribute to the design of the course itself, as well as its conduct and its evaluation (Coulter, Edgington & Hedges, 1986).

Although the preceding discussion focuses on classroom teaching, it relates to classroom climate as well. Research on the way students perceive the behavior of their instructors has led to the characterization of that climate as "chilly" for women and minorities (Hall & Sandler, 1982). We also know that students thrive in a climate that helps them move through a hierarchy of cognitive complexity. As undergraduates, in particular, progress beyond the simple memorization that may have characterized their first couple of years on campus, they need what Knefelkamp (1987) called "an environment of psychological safety" in the classroom. She equated "classroom climate" with "classroom as a community," emphasizing several key variables that should characterize the seminar

format: empathy; support; dialogue among peers and between students and professor; mutual responsibilities; and self-discovery, only guided by the professor, who sets the tone for the overall classroom climate.

Choosing and Using the Texts

Transformation also requires a willingness to continue learning, including learning what might be the best texts for students to tackle in addition to their required textbooks. Gray (1989), whose fulltime work involves the implementation of seminars districtwide in the San Diego public school system, explained the critical distinction between *texts* and *textbooks*:

> Textbooks, except for anthologies of primary materials usually contain knowledge organized and presented for a didactic purpose. They are therefore not discussable, which is what seminar texts must be. Being discussable means being rich in ideas, values, and issues, in complexities and ambiguities, perhaps in contradictions or mysteries. Being discussable means being food for thought, not just grist for the memory mill. (p. 18)

Thus we see the importance of close reading of the texts chosen--in their entirety and in part, classic and contemporary, from mainstream publications and pre-publication and--perhaps most important--written from the diversity of perspectives being discussed in the class. Even before in-class discussion, though, readers should "talk back to the author" of the texts--reacting to what they read. That response, though, should be in writing.

C. Wright Mills (1959) linked the concepts of thinking and writing when he pointed out how writing clarifies the thinking process. Implications of his lecture on intellectual craftsmanship suggest students keeping a journal, in which they record their reactions to the text. They might jot down questions or connections between one text and another, read earlier. This informal writing, then, serves as the basis for informed classroom discussion.

That discussion should move along according to what participants say, rather than

according to any planned, linear progression.[8] As a result, it qualifies as genuine intellectual discourse rather than what Gray (1989) termed "mindless recitation of information" (p. 18).

Recitation of information--whether on the part of teacher or student--has been the stock in trade of higher education to date. As the associate director of libraries at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Molholt, 1990) put it, "The classroom and laboratory experience is wholly focused on the transfer of information and knowledge between faculty and students" (p. 42). Molholt went on to cite Cleveland's discussion of information as a commodity. According to Cleveland, even in our information-based economy we should not equate information with a commodity.

Although information does share attributes with tons of grain or truckloads of lumber, it is unique in that it can be compressed (from a complex idea into a word or slogan, such as "no taxation without representation"), it can be transferred easily (from the book to the satellite, for example) and--most relevant--it can be shared (unlike the object, which must change hands).

Molholt (1990) concluded that information should be considered a strategic resource rather than a commodity. This assumption, in turns, means refocusing our view of information. Implicit is the need to develop systems that are interdependent and share information rather than duplicate it. This may not be the most efficient way to master a body of knowledge, but remember that we're not after any synthesis of or closure on any canon of feminist literature.

Still, incorporating the new scholarship about women and minorities into classes in

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[8] This notion is consistent with both sense-making and Carter's (see, for example, 1973 and 1974) discontinuity theory--that all things in reality are not connected and that things change constantly.

public relations necessitates going beyond any of the textbooks available. Why? This new material has been published only in journals or presented at academic conferences. By contrast, Kern-Foxworth (1989), who recently undertook a study of 60 public relations textbooks, found that of the 21,841 pages examined only 103 or .47 percent contained information about women or women's issues. Creedon (1989a) argued that the absence of representations of women in public relations textbooks is most acute in the history chapters. Grunig (1988) added the caution that current scholarship on women in public relations, whether published in textbooks or in journals, is in danger of featuring only the privileged white perspective.

The difficulty in this approach was highlighted recently during a workshop on feminist pedagogy at Towson State University. Coulter, Edgington and Hedges (1986) discovered that machine-copied materials on women, introduced by instructors to supplement the textbook, often are considered less credible by students. Students tend to interpret this as the professor's hang-up or personal opinion.

Although the tendency to reject material on women is much greater among males than females (both students and faculty), female students do better work on assignments related to material about women (Coulter, Edgington & Hedges, 1986, p. 143). There are similar differential response to material on blacks, especially on black women.

The Role of the Participants

An effective seminar, according to Gray (1989), leads to enlarged understanding of complex, multifaceted material. Seminars demand rigorous thinking on the part of all members. However, students should not have to pass any "litmus test" of depth of knowledge or even interest in the topic to enroll in their classes--even seminars, which beg

for intense involvement on the part of all participants.

Frankly, I don't believe we need any PRALIP--a measure comparable to the CALIP, or Computer Aptitude Literacy and Interest Profile for students in public relations. After all, we have no political agenda aimed at producing graduate or undergraduate ideologues committed to managing their public relations programs based on anyone's pet theory or model. Once again, then, we see that the teaching mode is appropriate for the subject, since a seminar is not headed so much for closure or synthesis as for what Gray (1989) called a "collaborative quest for understanding, in a mutual testing of each other's responses to text" (p. 18).

The seminar fulfills a second function, one most important to feminist pedagogy: validating personal experience as a starting point for learning (Coulter, Edgington & Hedges, 1986). Giving students equal voice in the classroom is "a way of acknowledging that they exist as individuals and of showing them how to make connections between themselves and others, between their culture and other cultures" (p. 140).

More specific responsibilities of participants, listed below, might serve as groundrules for the seminar itself. These obligations--written as groundrules that speak directly to the students--include:

* *Being willing to stretch yourself by tackling large amounts of difficult reading.* To do so, try concentrating on small, critical passages within larger works. You also might relate each new text to previous readings.

* *Coming prepared by having read the texts and having thought about them.* More specifically, plan to come prepared with an opening question that would allow other participants to think and answer without feeling threatened or vulnerable. The best questions,

in my view, have several plausible and defensible answers.[9] Remember that you can pose questions to which you don't have answers. They might relate to sections of the text you found unclear or simply to your own curiosity.

* *Allowing yourself time to think or reflect before you comment.*

* *Expecting to gain confidence and skill in the process of the seminar over time.*

* *Respecting the contributions of other participants.* Keep in mind, at the same time, that not all statements or even beliefs are equally valuable. Respect, according to Gray (1989, p. 20), does "not preclude on-the-spot corrections of misstatements and misreadings--outright errors, that is, as opposed to differing opinions."

* *Respecting the attitudes and behaviors that we all bring to the seminar.* We acknowledge that we are conditioned by our gender, race, class, life experiences, age and ethnicity in ways that will affect our interactions.

* *Taking responsibility for monitoring ourselves and each other and pointing out these behaviors, especially if they negatively affect our ability to learn in the seminar.* We will not blame each other for attitudes and behaviors that are the result of cultural myths, stereotypes or misinformation. On the other hand, we accept our individual responsibility not to repeat these myths, stereotypes and misinformation once we have learned otherwise.

* *Listening hard.* To do this, you might try to follow every answer with another question. Or, try rephrasing every question articulated by another participant. Evaluate others' stated opinions on the basis of their supporting arguments or evidence.

* *Making every effort to keep focussed on the topic at hand.*

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[9] As the axiom of the Mapuche tribe in South America goes, "If a question can't be argued in four different ways, it's not worth asking."

* *Working to create a climate of truth and openness.*

* *Assuming that all participants are always doing the best they can.*

Every seminar needs groundrules to keep it from degenerating into a bull session. Issues to be considered include interruption, devaluation, favoritism, concentration, preparedness, effort, risk, candor and trust.

The groundrules established above should discourage unformed ideas and misguided notions of tolerance. In contrast, these procedures and responsibilities value ideas and opinions that are cogent, respectful and buttressed by supporting arguments. When accepted by seminar participants, they could serve for points of discussion in ensuing classroom situations. In this way, standards of civility and intellectual rigor will characterize the true seminar.

The interactions that develop through these groundrules operationalized during the seminar process also illustrate the typical gender roles that approach the more content-specific nature of our courses in public relations. As a way of encouraging women and minorities, in particular, to aspire to the critical role of manager we could look at the androgynous nature of the seminar. Key concepts of that style include the *appreciation of* both masculine and feminine characteristics; avoidance of stereotypes and myths; consideration of alternative leadership styles; development of support systems through mentoring, networking, support groups and so forth; and strategies of empowerment.

Any efforts to empower all students should be applauded. So, too, should the seminar format encourage all students to participate more--either as individuals or, in the larger class, as members of a group. Issues to consider with collaborative work include group dynamics and the kinds of assignments that lend themselves to joint efforts. For just one example, in a

large lecture we might pause at an evocative point and ask students to discuss the issue with a neighbor for five to ten minutes. Then draw the class back together and brainstorm about the results (Thorne, 1989).

Evaluating the Results

If we adopt a more cooperative and less authoritarian style of teaching, then what kind of results do we expect or are we willing to accept? In my view, students' engagement in thoughtful, informed discussion should be rewarded. Incentives should relate to the pedagogical approach involved. As students take on more of the roles and responsibilities more traditionally associated with the professor, then assignments, tests and grading policies should reflect that burgeoning involvement. Schuster and Van Dyne (1985) pointed out the hypocrisy inherent in the difference between what teachers say they value and what they actually use to determine a grade. They recommended that class discussion be graded and that both peer review and self-evaluation should count in the final grades.

Further, if we agree that the asking of relevant questions is important, students should actually write down their questions--at least three for each key text. The rule of thumb, according to an article on guided questioning ("How to Get Students to Ask Good Questions," 1987), should be: "What questions, if answered, would give you a better understanding of this material?"

Evaluation of those questions should be based on (1) the clarity of the question; (2) its level of cognitive complexity; and (3) the student's progress in asking more penetrating, complex questions. Here the work of Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues in the mid-1950s becomes relevant. Sanders (1966) used their research to devise a classification of questions according to cognitive complexity, ranging from recall to evaluation. Lowest-level questions

require only memory,[10] while higher-order queries require making judgments.[11]

In a large class, *groups* of students may gather together to share what they consider their "best" questions--those most valuable to bring to the whole class. Each group, then, might be allowed to pose one of its questions that day. Each exam should allow for student-generated questions as well. Evaluating the questions themselves, as well the answers, could be based on Sanders (1966) hierarchy of cognitive complexity.

As an experiment in the kinds of questions we can expect students to generate from their reading, I gathered together the queries posed by members of a large undergraduate course in public relations theory. Students had no reason to think that the questions they brought to class that day would be treated any differently than usual (questions normally served as the basis for the day's discussion). However, with no editing and only a quick job of grouping together the questions into logical chunks, I was able to publish an article in a major professional journal, IABC's *Communication World* ( ). My words in the text served only as "the glue" that connected the students' questions about salaries and sexism in the field. They touched on the key points of similarities and differences between male and female practitioners, the pay gap, aspirations, strategies and balancing professional with personal goals.

The conclusion of the article and, thus, the outcome of the experiment? That we may not have learned through our readings and discussion how to overcome sexism in public

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[10] Examples of recall questions relevant to public relations include "What do the following words mean: flack, whistle-blowing, technician?" and "What percentage of PRSA members are accredited?"

[11] An example of an evaluative question in public relations is: "Based on what you have studied, is it fact or opinion that women in public relations experience discrimination at work? What is the evidence that supports your response?"

relations. We haven't figured out the best way for women to be promoted to managerial positions or for all practitioners to be paid what they are worth--regardless of gender or race. What the class and I did learn, though, was to question the realities of the workplace and whether any vestiges of discrimination must remain into the last decade of the millennium.

Benefits of the Seminar Process

What do professors and their students stand to gain from all of this? To list just a few, the pleasure of genuine intellectual discourse about issues and ideas that matter deeply, the certainty of deepening their own knowledge of these important questions and the possibility of facilitator and participants alike broadening their horizons.

This paper, of course, will not revolutionalize what or how any of us teaches. It is not a "how to" guide to transformation--or even to teaching with a seminar style. Instead, it has explored ways to think about such change--despite the barriers inherent in using an unfamiliar pedagogical approach to introduce new content to students who remain suspicious of our sincerity or credibility.

However, through a seminar approach to any course in public relations, all students--majority and minority, male and female--should gain a truer and more complete understanding of the human experience. Even if the content of the course itself is not transformed, their professor's perspective in teaching the course may reflect a gender and racial consciousness and inclusivity heretofore lacking. Women and minority students might come to regard their prospects as more than "peripheral public relations practitioners," relegated to routine and often insignificant tasks.

Thus, in the short run, the pedagogical approach and the content knowledge advocated in this paper should create an inclusive community of scholars in public relations.

That community would be built on the exchange or sharing of information, rather than a one-way direction that reflects the anachronistic source-receiver model of communication. And in the long term, our students may establish a generation of managers who will reject any asymmetrical practice that does not value the diversity, the equity, the cooperation, and the responsibility that have characterized their education.

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